



Three Myths About... *Money in Politics*

In the last election cycle, a common refrain in the media was that there was too much money in politics – much of it undisclosed, “dark money.” To this end, politicians and organizations that advocate more campaign finance regulations have proposed lower contribution limits, taxpayer financed campaigns, and greater disclosure, all of which infringe upon the political speech rights guaranteed under the First Amendment. Here’s the reality behind three common myths often asserted about money in politics:

Myth #1: *The majority of money spent in elections is undisclosed.*

FALSE. According to the Federal Election Commission, approximately \$7.3 billion was spent on federal races in 2012. Of that total, less than \$300 million was spent by 501(c) organizations that did not disclose their donors – just under **4.3 percent** of spending on federal races.

Myth #2: *Nonprofit groups who don’t have to disclose their donors are buying elections.*

FALSE. In fact, the percentage of independent spending by organizations that are not required to disclose their donors declined in 2012 from 2010. In fact, only 28 organizations that did not disclose their donors spent more than \$1 million on all independent expenditures in 2012 – and most are well-known groups like Planned Parenthood and the NRA.

Myth #3: *Money buys elections.*

FALSE. Based on the 2012 election results, candidates who received the most financial backing – whether directly, or indirectly as the recipients of spending on their behalf – aren’t guaranteed victory. As with Mitt Romney, Linda McMahon, and others, the candidate with the most votes always wins.

THE VERDICT: Contrary to most reporting, the vast majority of money spent in politics is fully disclosed. This growing level of political spending should be encouraged, as it represents everyday Americans participating in their community and in civic life.



CCP is a nonpartisan, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization focused on promoting and protecting the First Amendment political rights of speech, assembly, and petition. It was founded in 2005 by Bradley A. Smith, former member and Chairman of the Federal Election Commission.